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A LETTER FROM CHURCH WOMEN IN KOREA

(The letter below was sent to the Women's Committee, NCCJ, translated from Korean and was read at the March 1 (Anniversary of Korean Independence Day in 1919) Prayer Meeting at Shinanomachi Church, Tokyo, which was sponsored by various Catholic and Protestant Christian groups.)

"With Japan in the midst of an economic war with America, we regret adding another concern--the fact that Korea-Japan economic relations also are under a dark shadow. The founder of the Pang Rim textile company in Korea was a Korean resident in Japan, but it is said that over 85 per cent of the company's stock is held by Japanese. During the past ten years, the company has grown into a large corporation with 6,000 workers. By 1972, the original capital of the company had increased by four times. This growth has depended heavily on the sweat of young women workers in Korea.

"According to law, workers in foreign-owned industries are prohibited from striking. Although there is a law limiting working hours, the company shows no intention of keeping the law. The workers receive one-fifth of the minimum wage received by women workers doing the same kind of work in Japan, and they are forced to work more than 10 hours a day, seven days a week, enduring the discomfort of a factory temperature of 40 degrees C. Often they do not have enough time to eat their lunch or to rest. The workers have been taking drugs in order to keep up with the intensity of the work, but the drugs show after-effects, such as deformed babies after their marriages.

"One young woman who worked for three years but was recently laid off related the story of her life: 'My father worked as a male servant and my mother sold vegetables in order to provide for eight children. We grew up without enough food. After I barely finished elementary school I had to work as a live-in maid. I was too young to apply for any other job. I came to Seoul when I was 16 years old, used my older sister's name, and got a job at the textile company. My job was to carry bundles of thread, which is usually men's work. But this job provided me an extra 80 won per day.' (This amount of money will buy one bowl of noodle soup.) The workers of this company made 14 demands to the management, including definite working hours, days off for national holidays, and payment for up to two hours of overtime work. But the company dismissed the young women who made the demands without any payment or compensation.

"We, the conscience of our nation in calling for the restoration of democracy, have formed a task force to support the struggle of workers. Under the name of Japanese economic cooperation, the tyranny of Japanese capitalists is such that this country is being used for industries that export pollution and supply sex for pleasure-seeking foreign tourists.

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"In 1976 the Korean deficit to Japan was \$1,290 million. Within the next 11 months this increased to \$1,630 million. The government's policies which protect foreign capital have not helped domestic industries, which have more and more dehumanizing living conditions. The government proudly announced earnings of \$360 million from one million tourists who came to Korea. It was noted that 70 per cent of these were Japanese. We sincerely anticipate conscientious actions by Japanese women, and submit the following three points for your consideration: (1) We ask for fair treatment of women workers in the Pang Rim textile company, and ask that Japanese women cooperate and support our struggle. (2) The suffering of Korean workers is directly related to the actions of the economic complex controlled by the ruling powers of both countries. We appeal to conscientious Japanese to cut these economic connections for the sake of the re-humanization of workers. (3) We sincerely await your efforts on behalf of a withdrawal of all Japanese corporations from Korea and an end to sex-hunting tourism by Japanese men."

Mrs. Kong Duk Kwee
President of Church Women United
in Korea

(The Pang Rim Textile Company, known as Sakamoto Boseki in Japan, was formerly located in Osaka-fu, Japan. The long working hours and terrible working conditions in its Japanese factory were well known. With a great deal of effort a union was organized in the latter part of 1958. Presently the factory's operations have stopped, and for the past four years 600 union members have been fighting for their delayed compensation--eds.)

For the first time....

JAPAN-KOREA CHURCH YOUTH MEET

In an attempt to set forth a meaningful partnership among church youth of Japan and Korea, a preparation meeting was held in Seoul, Feb. 20 to 22. Strangely enough, it was the first such meeting ever planned.

The delegation from Japan included 10 youth representatives of denominations and action groups (of the ten, two were from the Korean Christian Church in Japan), and was led by Rev. YAMAMOTO Masanobu of Nishikatamachi Church, Tokyo (Kyodan).

With around 20 representatives from Korean churches sitting at the meeting table, the young leaders dealt with topics of great importance for both countries.

"Economic cooperation" was one. Under the name of cooperation, it was pointed out, what has been so far achieved is little more than the Korean economy's dependence upon Japan, and Japan's control over Korean economic affairs. Exploitative conditions for textile workers, many of them young women, at Japanese owned or subsidized factories were reported. The existence of Japanese runaway shops is strongly resented. Pollution producing factories finding refuge in Korea pose a real threat to the lives of Korean people.

Among many other topics, the over-all situation and problems of Korean residents in Japan needs to be taken note of here. Forgotten and neglected by both governments, Korean residents in Japan are struggling to establish their identity -- neither as Korean nor as Japanese, but as "Koreans in Japan" now that the majority of the Korean young people are of the third generation.

(continued on page 6)

Awaiting the spring wind....
KAMAGASAKI SITUATION UNCHANGED

by KUSUNOKI Toshiaki
DMS/NCCJ

The snowfall of two days in the western provinces caused more than half an hour delay in the train schedule, which normally prides itself in being first in the world in precision. I got off at Osaka, the second largest city in Japan. Early February winds made me pull in my heavy over-coat for comfort. Though only a short time after sunset, it was bitterly chilling.

Recession or depression, it was the same to many people, especially for day-laborers here, hired in the morning and fired in the evening when the work is over. My trip here was to meet a group of urban industrial mission workers, especially those of the Winter Survival Program. It operates in a community known as Kamagasaki even after the city of Osaka decided to shrug off the old image of a nationally famous slum, and gave it a new name, "Love Your Neighbor Area." To meet the various needs of the community, the Program has laid out its basic tasks to perform in the following three major areas: medical patrol at night; free food/meal distribution program; and negotiation with the local administration offices.

Night Patrol: During the peak season between Dec. 25 and Jan. 4, an average of 225 persons were found every night sleeping on the street, under highway overpasses inside abandoned Cadillacs, and in cardboard made shelters. Throughout the winter the group makes the rounds of Kamagasaki with first aid kits, bottles of hot soup, stacks of blankets, and flashlights. Stomach pills and new bandages for leg and feet burns are in great need. The reason for the former item, perhaps, is malnutrition and overdrinking; and for the latter, sticking one's feet into the fire to keep oneself warm. On more than one occasion during the last several years, the patrols have met with dead bodies on the streets-- dead of cold after getting drunk and going to sleep. Drinking to many people here is just another way of keeping warm, however momentary it might be and however well they might know that it is. Finding those who need medical attention and doing whatever can be done is another important job of the patrol. Many people here have the bitter experience at different hospitals and clinics of having the door slammed in their faces in one way or another. In some cases the city ambulance service has refused to take them into the car, saying in effect, if not in actual utterance, "Where can you go from here? You are after all a Kamagasaki cat." Around 20 TB patients, each with varying degrees of illness, were found in the fifteen days after Christmas. Whatever the causes in addition to TB, 336 people died on the streets in ten months last year.

Free Meals: The Winter Survival Program has, again in the 15 days, provided more than 4,000 free meals--roughly 1,000 breakfasts, 1,200 lunches and 1,800 suppers. The city parks where people used to receive meals and spend their days in the past have now closed down; they were actually fenced off by the city of Osaka with the pretext of renovation. With TV cameras monitoring from atop several lamp posts, the police are quick to come to disperse any 'unlawful' gathering in the streets.

Negotiation with Local Offices: What should be done if people with acute illnesses are not properly attended to at hospitals, to say nothing of TB patients? Where should the people bring their rightful grievances? How should papers be filled in and submitted to bureaucratic, administrative offices if indeed there are still some people left in the community who might have faith in the local authorities? Besides demanding from the city more jobs for these day-laborers, the Winter Survival Program workers are much needed to step in in these instances.

The "First Spring Wind," as we Japanese know it, has recently punctuated the end of winter here. Fresh green leaves will come out soon. So will the new buds. Yet the wind of depression is here to stay for some time. The aged, the weak,

(continued)

and the handicapped laborers here seems not to have heard the whispering of the spring wind, and no one knows when they will. It's still a mighty cold winter.

A slide set with a 35 minute-tape in Japanese on "Winter Struggle in Kamagasaki" produced by Kansai Urban Industrial Mission is now available from KIBONOIE, 2-8-8 Haginochaya, Nishinari-ku, Osaka-shi 557. The rental fee is ¥2,000. Telephone: (06) 632-1310.

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Schools Council meet
MOVING TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE FROM COC


The executive committee (often called "the 12-PERSON Committee" because of the number of members) of the COC-Related Schools Council has decided in meetings held on Feb. 7 and Feb. 27 to move in the direction of becoming independent of the Council of Cooperation (COC) and becoming an associate member of JNAC, the trans-Pacific organization for cooperation in mission. (JNAC, Japan North American Commission on Cooperative Mission, consists primarily of seven North American mission boards, the Kyodan, and the COC. The COC is the organization on the Japan side set up to deal with the sharing of personnel and funds from those North American churches. The three Japan member organizations are the Kyodan, the COC-Related Schools Council, and the Christian Social Work League.) The spring session of the Schools Council sometime in May will likely deal with the committee's proposal.

The proposal is the result of over a year of deliberation on the relation of the Schools Council to the COC because of growing dissatisfaction on the part of many committee members with some trends within the Kyodan. The problem came to a head at the General Meeting of the COC in December 1976 when the COC Chairperson (and Kyodan moderator) permitted an unauthorized person to attend the meeting despite a vote of the COC executive Committee in emergency session that such attendance not be permitted. Several discussions since then between the COC Chairperson and the 12-Person Schools Committee to try to come to a meeting of minds have been fruitless. The 12-Person Committee's assertion is that this move is merely a desire to no longer be bound organizationally by the COC and is in no way a denial of cooperation, especially with churches on the local level. It is further affirmed that there is no desire to change the status of missionaries. It is possible that there may be very little change from present patterns in dealing with concrete matters, depending on the direction which the discussions take from this point on, despite whatever change in organization takes place.

** ** ** ** (Ted Kitchen)

STICKER CAMPAIGN AGAINST NHK

The NHK (National Broadcasting Corporation) is headed for real trouble, since the current attack on it is not just a verbal one. NHK will no doubt lose some of its revenue from the National TV Tax, which is collected from almost all TV-set owners in Japan.

Two Christian groups are planning to distribute "We won't pay the NHK tax" stickers as long as it pronounces Korean names improperly and as long as it continues to show the fluttering Japanese flag  at the end of each day's program. Rev. CHOE Cheng Wha, and Rev. KIMURA Tomomi are the organizers of the sticker campaigns. Mr. Choe is a Korean pastor in Kita-Kyushu who is suing NHK because it refuses to use the Korean reading of his name or of other Koreans when they are presented in its news programs. Mr. Kimura, whose sharp eyes spot the proudly fluttering flag or other harbingers of ultra-nationalism, is chairperson of the NCC Special Task Force on the YASUKUNI Shrine issue.

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FROM THE JAPANESE PRESS.....

"The Japanese and Religion" is the theme of the March issue of "Gendai No Me" (Eyes of Today) magazine, which has the reputation of generally reflecting the political left and non-establishment views in society. The Higashi Honganji, Sokagakkai, and the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) are featured in the issue as three examples of religious struggles of today.

The Kyodan section of the magazine article, written by Rev. KUWABARA Shigeo, summarizes the development of the present Kyodan situation with a question about the relationship between religion and the state. Kuwabara comments, "The Kyodan took the role of spiritual supporter of the imperialist war," but after the war "through the aid of American churches, Christianity became a champion of democratic society."

He says that the group of Kyodan Christians who formed the Federation of Evangelical Churches (Rengo) last year is seeking to reform the Kyodan by supporting as absolute the written "Confession of Faith," which was established in 1954, by those who cooperated with the military during the war. At the same time, another thrust for reform of the Kyodan comes from a group that accepts the "Confession of War Responsibility," written in 1967, which publically admitted the "mistakes" of Christians and the Kyodan during World War II.

In conclusion, it was mentioned that "new theology" and "new understandings of the faith" do not mean anything unless the role of theology is seen in relation to movements in history. The meaning of Christianity should be grasped along with the various problems which arise from the encounter between religion and state.

"Folk Religions of Modern Japan" by MURAKAMI Shigeyoshi, is another valuable article in the magazine which describes 12 folk religions which developed since the middle of the 19th century. Murakami briefly lists the development of each religion from its foundation to the present, and points out the general characteristics of each. All were formed before the establishment of the modern emperor system and offered promises of salvation to the people through a supreme power. The author explains that the Tenri and Konko religions were founded through resistance against the pressure of feudalistic social and religious orders, forming their own teachings centered on salvation in this world through the creation of a peaceful ideal society for all. These religions developed particularly among farmers, who were the group most oppressed by the government of the time.

The founders of five of the 12 religions (Nyorai, Tenri, Konko, Renmon and Omoto) were women who appealed to the oppressed in society. The organizations took root by building strong solidarity among believers. According to the article the Omoto religion was particularly suppressed by the government because of its strong influence for a restructuring of the nation during an economic depression which was sweeping the nation. The article clearly indicates that these religions which did not cooperate with the imperial government were severely suppressed and their believers were frequently imprisoned. Other religious movements under the imperial government emphasized escatology and dealt only with personal salvation apart from politics and social issues. Murakami emphasized that the present-day understanding of religious freedom can be appreciated only by knowing the sufferings of various religious groups experienced under the imperial system.

Debate on National Defense Force. The decision by the Japanese National Defense Forces to purchase U.S. F15 and P3C U.S. military aircraft has triggered debates on the future situation of Japanese military power. Increasingly, the government strongly justifies the possession of military arms. Even opposition political parties have changed their attitude, accepting the necessity of defense forces. "Letters to the Editor" in the Asahi newspaper have reflected various voices of youth on the problem.

A student of 19 writes (Feb. 18), "Why do we need weapons to attack other countries?" She argues that the national defense force budget is 2.7 times more than that of the environmental agency. We have no policy concerning the increasing pollution of air, soil and water. It is important to recover the life of our environment rather than spend money for war games and massive military fighting equipment."

A student, 16 years old, (Feb. 23) indicates his disagreement, saying that, "Even though article 9 of the Constitution declares 'peace', there is the stubborn fact of the great power of the Japanese National Defense Forces." He believes the country needs these powers in view of the present international situation. A recent survey reports that about 80 per cent of the people agree to the necessity for military power in Japan.

A student of 21 years (Mar. 6) responded in opposition to the above opinion, saying, "Just because something is already in existence, do we have to accept it even in contradiction of the Constitution? Our constitution is not a decoration."

Another article in the newspaper reports that a certain economic organization is actively debating the matter, maintaining that the Japanese economy might find a way out of recession through national defence industries.

(Aiko Carter)

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Japan-Korea youth....)

Signs of the revival of Japanese militarism, in its political and economic forms, was one of the dangers most commonly felt by the participants throughout the three day lecture-discussion period. The meeting was closed with an agreement that the first consultation of church youth will be held early next year with more concrete and specific discussion of the revival of Japanese militarism.

An idea of having a youth consultation between Japan and Korea was talked about by many people with a variety of interests and concerns with Japan-Korea relations. The idea took shape during the last Church Consultation in January and a task force of Japanese youth leaders among NCCJ-related churches was quickly formed. In Korea, developments are way ahead of Japan. Korean youth are organized on a national level with the Ecumenical Youth Council (EYC) on the move since 1976 (although suffering from heavy repression on different occasions, many of its leadership being jailed more than once). It was EYC that first launched the idea of having a preparatory meeting at this time.

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Quotes.....Quotes.....Quotes.....

"Any Christian who is satisfied to function within and perpetuate the framework of division, is building a dividing wall contrary to the blood of Jesus and the resurrection of Christ."

Comment on Ephesians 2:14-15
by John Mbiti
One World, Mar. 1978, p. 22